Performing Te Whare Tapa Whā: Building on Cultural Rights to Decolonise Prison Arts Practice

This article explores *Ngā Pātū Kōrero: Walls That Talk* (2019), a documentary theatre production staged by incarcerated men at Unit 8 Te Piriti, a specialist therapy unit for those convicted of sex offences located at Auckland Prison, Aotearoa New Zealand. The performance was built around Te Whare Tapa Whā (The House of Four Sides) – a widely used model of Māori health. In this article we discuss the use of masks in performance and the significance of Te Whare Tapa Whā as a dramaturgical device which builds on the foundations of cultural rights to help decolonise prison arts practice.

Keywords: applied theatre; prison theatre; documentary theatre; sex offender treatment; decolonising methodologies, Māori knowledge.

Introduction

On 14 June 2019, a small cast of mainly Māori incarcerated men staged a documentary theatre production at Unit 8 Te Piriti located at Auckland Prison, Paremoremo (Aotearoa New Zealand). Entitled *Ngā Pātū Kōrero: Walls That Talk* (2019), the production was devised from verbatim responses to interviews conducted with members of Unit 8 Te Piriti, a specialist therapy unit for those convicted of sex offences.[1] Sarah

[1] The documentary project followed from a series of creative engagements at Auckland Prison involving Rand Hazou and Pedro Ilgenfritz. In November 2016, Hazou was invited with storyteller Derek Gordon to visit Unit 8 to introduce the men to different approaches to directing and performing the monologue 'To be or not to be'. In May 2017, the Theatre Behind Bars programme, facilitated by Hazou, offered six introductory theatre workshops to participants at Unit 9, including storytelling, physical theatre skills, and mask work led by Ilgenfritz. In December 2017 Gordon and Hazou co-directed *Puppet Antigone* at Unit 9 which involved incarcerated men performing an abridged version of Sophocles' play using Bunraku-style puppets (Hazou, 2020).

Woodland helped to facilitate the early workshops and the creative engagement with the audio recording process. The verbatim responses and focus on spoken word were counterposed in production with the use of masks to enhance the physical skills and expressiveness of the performers under the guidance of mask practitioner Pedro Ilgenfritz. The final production was directed by Rand Hazou and presented to an audience of prison staff, incarcerated members of the prison community, and invited guests.

One of the key ideas that emerged in an early workshop with the prison actors was Te Whare Tapa Whā (The House of Four Sides) – a model of Māori health developed by Sir Mason Durie (1994). This Indigenous model of wellbeing uses the metaphor of the wharenui or meeting house with four walls or sides (Fig.1). These walls include taha tinana (physical health), taha wairua (spiritual health), taha hinengaro (mental health), and taha whānau (family health). Within this holistic model, each wall is necessary to the strength of the building. The theatre participants engaged with this as part of their therapy in the Te Piriti unit. Indeed, the incorporation of Māori content and tikanga (cultural protocols) has been linked to the success of the unit's sex offender treatment program, with an in-depth evaluation of the Te Piriti Programme conducted in 2003 finding the program was effective in reducing sexual reconviction for Māori and non-Māori men (Nathan, Wilson and Hillman 2003).

[Insert Fig. 1]

Fig.1 Te Whare Tapa Whā or The House of Four Sides – a wholistic model of Māori Health developed by Sir Mason Durie based on the metaphor of the wharenui or meeting house. Image credit: Jeanne Leclercq.

From the Te Whare Tapa Whā model, we developed a series of interview questions relating to each of house's 'sides' to elicit verbatim responses from the incarcerated community at the unit. Playwright Stuart Hoar assisted in editing sections of these transcribed responses into a script that was rehearsed by the small cast of five incarcerated men from the unit. Te Whare Tapa Whā was also an important dramaturgical device in the final production, used to structure the performance around separate scenes, each of which focused on an aspect of health and the different ways it was impacted by incarceration. The incorporation of Te Whare Tapa Whā was an attempt to centre Māori knowledge within the creative process and decision-making.

This article explores the significance of Te Whare Tapa Whā as a device that informed the dramaturgical and aesthetic choices in the theatre-making. The article begins by describing the opening scene of the production in order to situate the play and the themes with which it engaged, such as the high incarceration of Māori within the New Zealand carceral system and the importance of cultural rights. The article then discusses the documentary theatre aspect of the production before examining the use of masks as a means to activate the bodies of the performers and ensure that spoken text was not privileged over the theatricality of performance. The article explores how the use of masks and physical performance has the potential to facilitate a kind of re-embodiment commensurate with the Te Whare Tapa Whā model which seeks to reunify in a holistic sense, elements that are disaggregated by Western concepts of health and wellbeing. In the final section of the article, we explore the implications of incorporating Te Whare Tapa Whā as a dramaturgical model in progressing a decolonising approach to prison arts practice. We suggest that art practices that build on foundations of cultural rights within carceral settings can help promote wholistic and relational understandings of healing indicative of Indigenous worldviews that can

challenge colonial legacies embedded within criminal justice that privilege Western epistemological notions of individualism.

Arriving in Prison

The production opens with a scene entitled 'Arriving' where each of the performers enters wearing a mask and shares with the audience the often dislocating, isolating and frightening experiences of first arriving in prison. The first to enter is a transgender character named Kauri, led into the performing area by another actor playing the role of a prison guard. As the guard ushers her into the space and mimes the actions of locking her into a single cell, Kauri explains:

> Yeah so, I arrived in prison June 2012. I was absolutely terrified: my first time in prison. The sounds; the smells; but the staff were actually pretty… very helpful; reassuring; so, nothing particularly adverse happened. I guess one of the things that did stand out for me was the isolation and loneliness because I was put into a what they call an at-risk unit because I was fa'afafine so I didn't go into a normal unit for a number of weeks. But in the isolation unit or at-risk unit there was no TV; no radio; no clothes; only what I was wearing. A pillow and a sheet. I didn't even have access to the telephone to ring whānau [family] or pen and paper. No books and because I didn't understand prison or how it operates, I thought that my whole sentence was going to be like that. So, I was very terrified; so that stands out at me; yeah from back then. (*Ngā Pātū Kōrero*, Unpublished Script, 2019, 1)

In this opening monologue, Kauri describes herself as a Fa'afafine, using the Samoan non-binary gender term that is commonly used to describe transgender persons in New Zealand. A recent report suggests there are around 30-40 transgender persons incarcerated in New Zealand, with only six of these serving time in the country's three

women's prisons (Sherwood and McNeilly 2019). While transgender persons can request to transfer to a prison that matches their gender identity, they must produce a birth certificate recognising their change in identity which can be a costly legal and administrative challenge. As a result, transgender prisoners are often housed in prisons that do not accord with their gender identity and as a result often face higher risks of violence and sexual assault (Cassaidy and Lim 2016, 8). The segregation of incarcerated transgender persons is official Corrections policy as outlined in the Prison Operations Manual and is conceived as a protective strategy. However, as the monologue demonstrates, segregation can compound the experience of isolation which can have negative impacts on the mental wellbeing of transgender persons (ibid., 9). The opening scene is indicative of the approach taken in *Ngā Pātū Kōrero*, which delves beneath correction policies and procedures to explore the reality of life in prison and its impact on aspects of healing and wellbeing for each of the five characters represented in the play.

According to the Department of Corrections, in March 2018 New Zealand's prison population reached an all-time high of 10,645 (Department of Corrections NZ 2018). Despite the high incarceration rates, we hear very little about the reality of prison life and the personal experience of those caught up in the criminal justice system remains largely invisible. This project was an attempt to challenge this silence and invisibility. Importantly, the high incarceration rates reflect racial disparities, with over 51% of the current prison population being Indigenous Māori, compared to 30.8% European, and 11.8% Pacific (Department of Corrections NZ 2019). Māori constitute more than half the prison population, despite being only 15% of the overall population (Stats NZ 2015). This disparity was reflected in the performing ensemble, which consisted of four Māori and one Pākehā (European New Zealander). The over-

representation of Māori in corrections has been linked to the ongoing impacts of the legacy of colonialism (Jackson, 2017). This legacy includes dispossession of land, cultural assimilation and the undermining of tikanga (cultural protocols) and traditional forms of social control (McIntosh and Workman 2017, 727).

Access to the arts and culture are enshrined as a right in a series of international covenants such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Article 27) (United Nations General Assembly 1948), and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (United Nations General Assembly 2007). And yet incarcerated peoples within criminal justice settings are routinely denied cultural participation and access is often used as a form of control or coercion by those in charge. Further, authorities might silence cultural expression as a strategy for removing identity and agency. In settler-colonial prisons where Indigenous peoples are drastically overrepresented, this denial of cultural rights has profoundly negative impacts on individuals and communities, advancing the shattering effects of colonisation and diminishing the capacity for healing.

Documentary and Verbatim: Recording and Performing 'Real' Stories

Ngā Pātū Kōrero was conceived as a documentary theatre project, an approach to theatre-making that utilises documentary material such as newspapers, government reports, and interviews as source material for scripts and performances. The work was also conceived as a verbatim theatre project, an approach that reproduces interview texts on stage using the exact words of respondents. Gallagher et al. (2012, 28) define verbatim theatre as using 'the actual words of people, often in direct first-person address or testimonial style, to raise issues relevant to a particular community and to activate broader social engagement.' Documentary theatre can be characterised by a central or exclusive reliance on 'actual' rather than 'imaginary' events (Favorini 1994, 32). As

such, it can provide commentary on events, persons and issues normally marginalised by popular modes of information dissemination and publicity in the public sphere. Following on from a previous theatre project in the prison, the men had expressed a desire to work on a script that would reflect their own real-life experiences. This, combined with the potential for documentary and verbatim theatre to dig beneath the statistics, stigma, and sensationalisation of imprisonment, informed the approach to *Ngā Pātū Kōrero*.

The production began with two devising workshops in April 2019 facilitated by Rand Hazou and Sarah Woodland. During the workshops, the participants identified Te Whare Tapa Whā as a useful theme to explore as part of the documentary performance. Together we devised questions responding to each of the four walls that would structure the interviews to be carried out in the prison. Examples of questions included: Tell me about your physical body and how it has changed in this place? What is wairua (spirit) to you and how do you practice it in prison? Describe a moment of intense emotion (positive or negative) in prison? What did it teach you? Tell me about a significant person in your life? What did this person teach you? The Interviews were conducted by Hazou with eight volunteers from the unit in early May. They were transcribed verbatim and sections of text were selected and developed into a play with the help of playwright and dramaturg Stuart Hoar. The play relied almost entirely on the words of the incarcerated respondents as recorded in interviews.[3]

Importantly, the scripting involved creating composite characters by merging together different sections of interview responses. This was to protect the identity of the

[3] An editorial decision was made to include five short one-liner jokes to help provide some levity and a narrative through line for one of the characters who was identified as "the funny guy." Hoar also decided to limit the amount of "filler" sounds transcribed from the interviews such as "ums" and "ahs" which were thought to impede the flow of the lines and the overall rhythm of scenes.

interviewees, to create coherent characters that could be played by the different prison actors, and to create some distance and safety for those actors. These decisions stemmed from an acknowledgement of the social stigma and the risks associated with being labelled a child sex offender. As Webb and Jones (2008, 48) contend, 'Child sex offences are a particular problem for Māori men, since the cultural and spiritual consequences of these offences on the offenders are worse than for most other offences.' Webb and Jones argue that Māori child sex offenders not only incur consequences from the Pākehā legal system, but also 'deep and damaging cultural and spiritual consequences that would not accrue to other types of offenders' (ibid). Indeed, the danger associated with the taboo nature of sexual offending against children was explicitly referenced by participants in the project. Conversely, participants also highlighted the safety that they often felt as participants in the Te Piriti Special Treatment Programme which is located in a dedicated unit that is separate from the larger prison population and in which offenders remain while they complete the programme. These sentiments are expressed in the opening scene of the play, in which the character Hemi describes first arriving in Te Piriti:

> When I first arrived [in this unit]; I felt quite, how would I put it, curious. Not knowing what will happen to me here, because through the other places I'd been, you know, there was a sort of certain way I had to act, because you're with other people that may not have liked the things that you had done in the past. So, you had to be very careful not to let them know. Otherwise, you might have found yourself getting hurt. So, it took me a couple of weeks to realise; yeah, this [unit] is a safe place. (*Ngā Pātū Kōrero*, Unpublished Script, 2019, 1)

The final script comprised eight scenes: arriving in prison; adapting to life; four scenes each focusing on one of the four walls (tinana, wairua, hinengaro, and whānau); a scene

about what interviewees would like to 'build' for their future; and a final scene about what they would like to leave behind upon release.

The decision to create composite characters in the scripting was also a response to the need to create some distance and safety for the prison actors. Some of the prison interviewees recounted details of their own abuse and trauma, reflecting the intergenerational trauma and lateral violence that is a direct result of colonisation, and contributes to disproportionate Indigenous incarceration rates (Cunneen and Tauri 2016). Julie Salverson (1996) points to the importance of aesthetic form and theatrical structure in 'containing' personal traumatic stories, advocating the use of character as a potentially useful container that can provide distance through which participants can 're-externalise' traumatic events onstage (186). This also gave the performers freedom to experiment with different ways of representing the stories, and to not be personally tied to the stories in performance to an outside audience.

As an example of documentary and verbatim theatre, *Ngā Pātū Kōrero* created potential opportunities for healing by opening spaces to acknowledge certain 'truths' by performers and audiences as a precursor to further understanding and restoration. This approach is particularly relevant in theatre practices that focus on justice and healing in post-conflict contexts (Simic 2016). This was an important aspect for the men involved, who reflected on how valuable it was to participate with safety knowing that despite the taboo and stigma of their crimes, their voices could still be heard. This approach was not about abrogating the responsibility of offenders or marginalising the experience of victims. Rather it might be better understood as an approach informed by tikanga Māori (cultural protocols) and the concepts of *mana* and *utu*.

Speaking from a legal perspective, Valmaine Toki (2018) describes tikanga Māori as the 'legal structure' that underpins conduct in Māori society. According to

Toki, the aim of tikanga Maori is 'to achieve balance' (37), which involves 'the restoration of mana through utu' (49). While mana can be a complex concept, it can be translated as spiritual authority and power (Royal 2003, 4), and as a feature of human relationships, it can be linked to the idea of 'upholding the dignity and wellbeing of a person or persons' (Tomlins-Jahnke and Mulholland 2011, 1). Utu is more complex and is often erroneously translated as exacting revenge. Joan Metge describes utu as one of the most important ordering principles in traditional Māori society: 'The principle of reciprocity, which decreed that every gift received must be reciprocated by one of equivalent or preferably greater value' (Metge 2010, 19). In their article exploring the legal definitions of utu, Tai Ahu, Rachael Hoare, and Māmari Stephens suggest that utu 'describes the process of restoring [...] physical and spiritual relationships to an equal or harmonious state' (Ahu, Hoare, and Stephens 2011, 203).

The principles of mana and utu as regulators of imbalance resonates with the Te Whare Tapa Whā model, which 'recognises the importance of the relational dynamic and ultimately the need for balance: the aim of tikanga' (Toki 2018, 67)[4]. In the case of *Ngā Pātū Kōrero*, some audience members reflected on how the production created a space to challenge their preconceptions of men who commit sexual offences against children, and make a connection to their humanity. The documentary and verbatim form therefore provided opportunities to engage in processes of collective justice and healing by potentially facilitating acknowledgements that might contribute to a sense of restoration or balance. Further, the form enables a shift from a narrow focus on the

[4] The concepts of *mana* and *utu* are complex and it is beyond the scope of this article to do them justice. For more detailed discussion, Toki (2018) explores these and other key concepts of tikanga Maori in the context of law and criminal justice in New Zealand, and Webb and Jones (2008) describe in detail the impacts of sexual offending on different aspects of mana.

crimes themselves and the perpetrators as 'deviants' towards a broader understanding of the conditions and factors that precipitate such crimes in the first place.

Masking to reveal: Embodying 'real' stories through mask

A key directorial decision early in the creative process for *Ngā Pātū Kōrero* was to ensure that spoken text was not privileged over the theatricality of performance. Julie Salverson (1997, 184) describes how in attempting to be faithful to the integrity of a particular story, theatre practitioners often run the risk of resorting to an 'idealisation of authenticity' which emerges at the expense of aesthetic or theatrical forms considered as impositions or distortions to the re-telling project. Salverson's comments reflect a general concern in recent theatre scholarship seeking to problematise claims to 'authenticity' in documentary theatre projects which purport to represent unmediated access to 'real' stories (Bottoms 2006; Martin 2006). In rehearsing *Ngā Pātū Kōrero* the cast were introduced to masks as a way to balance engagement with the 'real' stories of incarcerated individuals recorded through the interviewing process with a sense of theatricality and a physical language which were seen as integral modes of engagement for both the prison actors and the eventual audience. Mark Evans (2006, 136) describes mask as a tool that is overtly theatrical, able to force the actor to engage physically with his or her actions, emotions and intentions, and to exteriorise them. The masks were also used to provide some further distance and safety between the characters and the actors performing them.

The masks operated on a number of levels, engaging the men in explorations of their own performed identities, helping to orient the performance towards cultural rights and potentially challenging colonial legacies embedded (and embodied) within criminal justice. The concept of not having a voice and remaining silent and invisible within the prison environment connects with the mask as a tool that conceals the individual (face

and voice) while simultaneously revealing and highlighting the body, gesture, and movement. Weekly mask workshops were delivered at Paremoremo by Pedro Ilgenfritz, a senior lecturer at Unitec in Auckland, and mask teacher and researcher over seven weeks. The workshops introduced different mask types for the participants to develop theatrical expression, improvisation skills, and theatre craft.

The first mask the participants encountered was the neutral mask. Mira Felner (1985, 158) suggests:

> The neutral mask is a tool to return to a precognitive state, where individuals are free to gather mimic impressions. The neutral mask encourages actors to let go of their physical mannerisms, rhythm, posture, attitudes and assume the presence of a universal being, with no past or future.

The participants engaged in neutral mask exercises and improvisations where they explored the concept of *not* having a character and the associated individual traits. They were encouraged to express this through gesture, rhythm, attitude and movement, and the relationship with time, space, and memory. The possibility of exploring a condition of tabula rasa and inhabiting a way of being that eschews a 'past' was an incredibly powerful metaphor for the participants, given the inescapable reality of their criminal histories and incarceration. Several men observed that it was a revelation to physically experience the state of 'being and doing for the first time' with no previous story or narrative. They commented on ideas of 'purity' and 'having no memory' and related the neutral mask to their therapy at Te Piriti Unit.

In the first session, the participants reflected on the parallels between mask in a performance context and their own experience building a new social mask. They spoke eloquently about 'changing their mask,' 'rebuilding a mask,' and 'coming to terms with their own masks.' The men reflected on losing their social identity and having to

assume ‘the prison mask.’ Peter Brook's idea of ‘the invisible made visible’ (1969, 39) as a central aspect of sacredness in theatre gains a new dimension when the inmates put the mask on to unmask the carceral narrative. Workshop participants began to associate the concept of having a mask on stage with their masks in everyday life. One of the men described how mask functioned in the prison context: ‘The first thing that we have to do when we come here [Te Piriti Unit] is to remove our mask; we need to be true to ourselves and others.’ Another observed: ‘Masks gave me the freedom to do things I normally don’t do.’ These comments support the idea that using mask in a project such as this can elicit both artistic and therapeutic outcomes. This approach has been explored extensively in the work of Geese Theatre in the UK, who use mask as a central metaphor in their prison-based practice (Baim, Brookes, and Mountford 2002). The men recognised the metaphor of mask beyond the framework of performance, reflecting on their personal mask, and how masks are not permanent and rigid artefacts, but are rather in a state of constant flow.

The second set of masks workshop participants encountered were character masks, allowing them to explore the physicality of different personas and investigate simple dramatic situations. It was clear that the masks allowed the men a certain aesthetic distance from themselves and safety to explore dramatic situations without exposing their personas to each other and the workshop facilitators. In the last part of the workshop, participants had the opportunity to work with the New Zealand Masks. These masks were designed by sculptor Kate Lang in collaboration with Pedro Ilgenfritz, and they depict New Zealand archetypes representing Aotearoa's cultural diversity but nevertheless created in the European mask making tradition. [5] The masks

[5] An exploration of the cultural significance of mask within Māori culture is beyond the scope of this paper. While there does not appear to be developed tradition of using mask in Māori performance,

gave the men at Te Piriti confidence and knowledge that was transferred to the performance of *Ngā Pātū Kōrero: Walls That Talk* (Fig. 2). The verbatim text composed of their own stories was performed using the New Zealand masks, allowing them to safeguard their own identities, take liberties in terms of physicality and character construction, and providing a technical base to explore the details and intricacies of the text.

[Insert Fig. 2]

Fig.2 A scene from the play showing the use of the half-masks created by Kate Lang and Pedro Ilgenfritz to enhance the physical skills and expressiveness of the performers. Photo credit: Sarah Woodland.

Sam McKegney (2016, 202-204) discusses the 'fracturing' of connections between mind and body and the 'coerced disembodiment' of Indigenous men through the colonial project, via carceral systems of control such as residential schools. He cites Hokowhitu (2009), who argues in relation to Māori masculinities that colonisation involved the 'domestication' of Māori male physicality. Institutions of incarceration 'seek to limit embodied experience and replace it with fear of and revulsion toward the body' (204). The Te Whare Tapa Whā model seeks to reunify in a holistic sense, elements that were disaggregated by Western concepts of health and wellbeing, and in the production, the mask and physical performance provided an opportunity to facilitate a kind of re-embodiment and engender a more holistic and relational focus that is indicative of a Māori worldview.

there are documented examples of their use and several scholars draw parallels between traditional art of tattooing the face (tā moko) and concept of mask. See for example Farrimond (2007).

Te Whare Tapa Whā in performance

During the 1980s in New Zealand, there was increasing interest Māori conceptions of wellbeing and a growing awareness of the limitations of Western treatment models in addressing the mental health needs of Māori (Thakker 2013, 398). This led to the development of several models of Māori health of which Te Whare Tapa Whā is seen as particularly significant. As proposed by Sir Mason Durie, Te Whare Tapa Whā became widely accepted as the preferred Māori model of health during the 1980s (Durie 1994), and has since achieved wide and common usage.[6] As explained earlier, Te Whare Tapa Whā uses the metaphor of the wharenui or meeting house with four walls or sides. These walls include taha tinana (physical health), taha wairua (spiritual health), taha hinengaro (mental health), and taha whānau (family health). Within this holistic model, each wall interacts and is necessary to the strength of the building. As Glover (2005, 13) explains, 'The model is attractive for its simplicity, metaphorical resonance for Māori and basis in a Māori world view.' According to Thakker (2013), the Te Whare Tapa Whā model is now widely used within corrections in New Zealand and has informed various approaches including alcohol or drug rehabilitation programs targeted at Māori offenders.

Along with the inclusion of Maori models of wellbeing, attempts have been made to tailor Western-based approaches to the needs of Maori offenders (Thakker 2013). An example is the Te Piriti Unit, which functions as a therapeutic community requiring participants to attend both group and individual therapy sessions which combine mainstream Western perspectives such as cognitive behavioural models with

[6] See for example the listing of Te Whare Tapa Whā on the Ministry of Health Website: https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/maori_health_model_tewhare.pdf

traditional Māori approaches such as Te Whare Tapa Whā (Thakker). It is worth noting that some tensions exist around the co-option of Māori values in state justice practices, which has led some Māori to reject the possibility of integrating Māori philosophies within the current system. Moana Jackson (1995, 34) summarises the concern with grafting Māori processes onto a state-controlled system:

> No matter how well intentioned and sincere such efforts, it is respectfully suggested that they will merely maintain the co-option and redefinition of Māori values and authority which underpins so much of the colonial will to control. A 'cultural justice system' controlled by the Crown is another colonising artefact. (cited in Webb 2017, 689)

Conscious of these tensions, the team nevertheless recognised that the group at Te Piriti presented Te Whare Tapa Whā as a compelling framework for the creative process.

The idea of Te Whare Tapa Whā and the metaphor of building a house is therefore a central device that structures the play and performance. Throughout the performance the characters use mime to erect walls and describe how prison impacts on aspects of the physical body, the spirit, mental and emotional states, and on family and social relations. At the start of the play, the performers assemble in a line at the back of the playing area. One of the performers shouts a command, 'Kua rite!' (get ready). The leader shouts, 'Ki raro!' (go down) and together the actors mime the actions of bending down to grasp a large section of wall. When the leader shouts, 'Hikitia!' (lift or raise-up), the ensemble together mimes the actions of lifting a heavy wall up to stand it in the space. They wait a moment signalling that they are ensuring that the wall is erect before taking a step back to admire their work. A second later another performer announces, 'Taha tinana' (the body), which becomes the title of the scene that follows and in which the various characters share aspects of prison life as it impacts on the physical body. In

this way the production uses the physical action of erecting walls as a dramaturgical device for structuring the performance. The characters repeat this action while cycling through the various sides or aspects of Te Whare Tapa Whā including taha wairua (the spirit), taha hinengaro (the mind), and taha whānau (the family).

In the scene 'Taha Tinana' (the body), the character Hemi explains the physical changes that he underwent after arriving in prison and importantly how these physical changes impacted on other aspects of his wellbeing:

> I was pretty sick, when I first come to jail from smoking meth all day every day. So, it's probably saved my life I think, jail. Huh, in a way. [I was] just gaunt, not a healthy weight. I had heaps of sores, and that wasn't too healthy at all, but then you come to jail [and] you get three meals a day, and free medical attention. When I first come in, I was still quite high. So, I didn't sleep for about four days; it took me about two years to get a regular sleep pattern going. [Now] good sleep; six o'clock every night. I wake at 6:30am for work, so it's healthy sleep patterns now. I think [my dreams] have changed too, since I first come to jail. Instead of scary dreams, to dreaming about hanging out with my kids, and all that sort of stuff now. It makes you in a better headspace, when you wake up from one of those dreams. (*Ngā Pātū Kōrero*, Unpublished Script, 2019, 1)

This short monologue eloquently demonstrates the integrated conception of Te Whare Tapa Whā as representative of a Māori world view of what constitutes good health. As Professor Meihana Durie, son of Sir Mason and the head of Massey University's School of Māori Art, Knowledge and Education (Te Pūtahi-ā-Toi) explained in an interview as part of the Prison Voices project[7]:

[7] Meihana Durie, interview by Rand Hazou, Auckland, 20 August 2019.

> Often the point is missed that Te Whare Tapa Whā is not about these four dimensions being separated or disconnected, [...] it is trying to impress on people that Māori wellbeing is about how all four dimensions are interwoven and interact. Somebody who is well will have a really strong flow and interaction of all four. To return to the image of the whare, if you can imagine pulling out one wall – taha tinana – so if someone is not eating well, or has injuries, when you pull out that wall everything is weakened as a result.

For Meihana Durie the model's holistic approach and relational focus is an expression of a Māori worldview that is contradistinctive to Western epistemology:

> It's not trying to take a scientific approach where you take a microscope and try and narrow down and pull out something that is tiny and minute and say this is the cause of the problem. The Māori approach is to go the other way - to expand out and look at the forces and energies that are coming together to diminish wellbeing so that they can be resolved.

The model therefore gave the verbatim interview participants and the performers a vocabulary and structure around which to explore their experiences inside prison through this more expansive Māori cultural lens. At times in editing the script, it was difficult to decide to which of the four sides a comment or monologue should be attributed, with many of the elements interacting with each other. Yet it worked particularly effectively as a framework for the verbatim interviews and as a dramaturgical device in performance, with some of those from Te Piriti reflecting later that the creative process had reinvigorated their understanding of the model and its importance in their lives. The model also anchored the process and the resulting performance in strengths-based discourse, a key feature of ethical and decolonising engagement with Indigenous peoples' life stories and experiences (see Fogarty et al.,

2018). While there were difficult and traumatic experiences represented within the work, the overall trajectory was towards strength, growth, and healing.

A strong legacy exists for drama-based methods being used in prisoner rehabilitation, and specifically sex offender treatment programmes (SOTP). In the case of Geese Theatre Company, and the subsequent work of their founding members Clark Baim (Baim et al. 1999), John Bergman and Saul Hewish (Bergman and Hewish 2003), the work in SOTPs was developed over many years, incorporating a fusion of image theatre, forum theatre and psychodrama with psychosocial approaches such as role theory and social learning theory and accepted sex offender treatment paradigms such as cognitive and behavioural therapy. While the use of mask was more widespread in Geese's mainstream offender focused programmes, Geese also included this approach within the SOTP context, focusing as ever on the mask as a metaphor for the different external behaviours that a person might present to themselves and the outside world, enabling them to cope with high pressure situations and (in some cases) hide from responsibility for their offending (see Baim, Brookes and Mountford 2002, Watson 2013).

The methodology utilised as part of *Ngā Pātū Kōrero* at Te Piriti was perhaps unique in terms of theatre in a SOTP context. As we have discussed, mask, although freighted with similar meanings as a metaphor, was used differently in this case. We approached the project with an open mind as to what the participants would explore and the rationale, as described earlier, was anchored in the ethos of community-based theatre rather than offender rehabilitation. This was an important distinction for us, aimed at progressing our ideals around a decolonial approach that might resist being drawn into a Western-centric rehabilitation agenda, and would place the participants and their knowledge, stories and life experiences at the centre of the artistic process.

An extension of this was the recognition that 'sex offenders,' particularly those who have offended against children, have a singular place in the wider public's carceral imaginary. They are reviled and stigmatised as the ultimate transgressors who deserve nothing but the most punitive treatment – but preferably banishment from society or death. There is no way back. As others have suggested, the carceral imaginary pervades the media, popular culture and public discourse, often directly influencing criminal justice policy (Fludernik 2019), and operating as a legacy of successive colonial and neo-colonial logics. And yet, as we discuss elsewhere, traditional Māori law dictates that the cultural and spiritual consequences for Māori men who offend sexually against children are greater than for other offences. Te Piriti and Te Whare Tapa Whā aims to create a 'way back' for these men by focusing on ways that they can restore mana. Approaching a theatre project with this group, we were therefore conscious that an unqualified aim of empowerment or 'giving voice' may not be appropriate in this context. The project needed to work within the culturally focused frameworks for healing and relationality that surrounded these participants.

Conclusion: Leaving Behind

This article has illustrated how ultimately the participants themselves elected to use the Te Whare Tapa Whā therapeutic model in framing the performance, possibly because of its central place within the work of Te Piriti. Also, it's strength as a culturally driven metaphor for healing made it a compelling framing device for this group. This meant that in some ways we were enlisted to accompany the residents of Te Piriti on their therapeutic journey, elevating the Te Whare Tapa Whā model into a new aesthetic and performative space. By building on the importance of cultural rights within the prison as a foundation, the production provided an opportunity to centre indigenous knowledge

and incorporate Te Whare Tapa Whā as a dramaturgical device to help decolonise prison arts practice.

By incorporating Te Whare Tapa Whā as a dramaturgical and theatrical device in a prison theatre production, *Ngā Pātū Kōrero* highlighted how conceptions of healing underpin Indigenous approaches to justice, and reinforced the assertion of Indigenous culture as an important part of decolonising Western criminal justice systems (Cunneen and Tauri, 2016, 131). A focus on healing relies on 'inter-relationality rather than individualism, and the importance of identity and culture in the process of decolonisation' which can work to shift 'the epistemological priority given to Western understandings of crime and control' (ibid., 129). *Ngā Pātū Kōrero* offered participants and audiences an opportunity to hear the personal stories of incarcerated persons in a communal experience which highlighted the importance of the relational in restoring balance and achieving healing and cultural justice. The use of masks offered both protection and freedom, so that the performers might expand their physical vocabulary and hopefully achieve a sense of re-embodiment in a system where this is typically controlled and regulated.

The final scene of the play, 'Leaving Behind,' is based on interview responses about what members of the Unit wished to leave behind once they left prison. During the scene, as each character expresses their final thoughts or desires about leaving, the actors remove their masks and place them on the ground in the performing area. At the end of a show, the actors must take off their masks and leave their 'characters' behind. But as one of the actors commented in final rehearsals, the four walls that they build throughout the performance will remain with them once they leave prison. In this way the performance stages the physical construction of different sides of a house and then ends with a sense that these walls or supports are becoming internalised in the bodies of

the actors onstage. They will become the *pou* or upright supports that will keep the men strong when they eventually transition into life outside the prison walls.

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